

## **Swearing in ceremony for Hinds County judges is Jan. 4**

December 17, 2010

Three new judges and eight incumbent Hinds County judges will take the oath of office on Jan. 4. The ceremony will begin at 9 a.m. in Courtroom No. 1 of the Hinds County Courthouse in Jackson. The ceremony is open to the public.

New judges elected in November include Hinds Circuit Court Judge William A. “Bill” Gowan, Hinds Circuit Court Judge Jeff Weill Sr., and Hinds County Court Judge Melvin V. Priester Sr. All are of Jackson.

Mississippi Supreme Court Chief Justice Bill Waller Jr. will administer the oath of office to Judge Gowan, as well as oaths to the four incumbent judges of the Fifth Chancery District of Hinds County.

U.S. District Judge Daniel Jordan of the Southern District of Mississippi will give the oath of office to Judge Weill.

Mississippi Supreme Court Presiding Judge James E. Graves Jr. will give the oath of office to Judge Priester.

Mississippi Court of Appeals Chief Judge Leslie D. King will swear in the three incumbent judges of the Seventh Circuit Court.

U.S. Magistrate Judge Linda Anderson will swear in the two incumbent Hinds County Court judges.

Circuit, Chancery and County Court judges serve four-year terms.

On Jan. 1, Circuit Judge Tomie T. Green will become senior circuit judge for the Seventh Circuit Court District of Hinds County. It will be the first time that an African American and the first time that a woman has held the leadership role of senior circuit judge in the Seventh Circuit Court District. Judge Green has served on the court for 12 years. Judge Swan Yerger, who did not seek re-election, previously served as senior circuit judge.

Judges Gowan and Priester have served by appointment of the Mississippi Supreme Court as special circuit judges for Hinds County since July 2008.

Judge Gowan previously served twice by gubernatorial appointment to fill vacancies on the Hinds County Court, first in 2002 and again in 2006. As Hinds County Court judge, he also presided over the Hinds County Drug Court. He worked for the Hinds County Sheriff’s Office for approximately 10 years. He was in-house counsel for about six years before becoming undersheriff. He served as an assistant city prosecutor in Jackson 1978-1990; as city prosecutor 1991-1994; and as assistant city attorney 1994-1998. Judge Gowan earned a Bachelor of Business Administration degree from the University of Mississippi and a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Judge Weill grew up in Tylertown. He practiced law in McComb for two years with Keith Starrett, who went on to become a U.S. District Judge. He also served as an investigator and assistant district attorney under former District Attorney Dunn Lampton in the Fourteenth Circuit District. He has represented Ward 1 on the Jackson City Council since 2007. He has maintained a private law practice in Jackson since 1986, representing clients

in civil and criminal matters. He completed mediation training at Harvard Law School in 2003, and has arbitrated or mediated more than 300 cases involving a variety of issues, including hurricane-related claims. He earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Michigan State University, and a law degree from the University of Mississippi School of Law.

Judge Priester previously served for nearly three years as a Jackson Municipal Judge. He opened a private law practice in 1987. He served as a special assistant attorney general assigned to health law matters from 1985 to 1987. He earned his law degree from the University of Texas Law School in Austin. He earned a Bachelor of Science degree in secondary education and a Master of Education degree in rehabilitation counseling from Boston University. Before entering law school, he worked in the mental health field for 10 years. He was a rehabilitation counselor and program director at a residential treatment program for emotionally disturbed adolescents in Dorchester, Mass. He worked as a psychiatric social worker at a Houston, Texas, psychiatric hospital, as an assistant unit director of a Houston out-patient mental health clinic, and as unit director of a residential mental health treatment program in Houston.

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